

YOUR 2013 GUIDE FOR SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT

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Tips for a brighter, more organized home

Refreshing your home for warmer weather is easier than you might think. To create a brighter, lighter, more organized home, try these simple tips from Sally Morse, the director of creative services at Hunter Douglas, a leading name in custom window fashions:



Welcome in the Natural Light: Nothing says warmer weather like a sun-soaked room, be sure to create a livable one with Nantucket window shadings.

• Clear Away

If cleaning and clearing away the clutter seems overwhelming, Morse has one simple trick to calm the nerves: "Try setting the kitchen timer for 15 minutes per area like the bedroom closet, pantry or foyer. Just telling yourself you're going to de-clutter the home in one weekend sounds draining," she says. "Rather, split up the tasks into smaller ones so you stay focused and don't get lost in the process." Make a list of all the areas you have to organize and space them out over a few days.

• Welcome in the Natural Light

Updating your window treatments is an uplifting and impactful décor change that

can easily be made. New window fashions will not only look stylish and beautifully filter light for a glowing room, they will also provide unlimited practical benefits. Morse suggests using Nantucket window shadings (from Silhouette) a line that is streamlined and casual and also features soft fabric vanes suspended between two sheer facings. These window coverings allow you to have a view and, even with the vanes open, they filter up to 88 percent of the sun's harmful UV rays. What's more, they are now offered with a cordless lifting system for enhanced child safety and a clean look.

• Bring Nature In

As Mother Earth comes to life again, it's a great time to bring that life indoors with easy-to-maintain plants and flowers. Try the cast iron Japanese perennial, one of the toughest species available. Nearly indestructible, it withstands low light, low humidity and a wide range of temperatures. Additionally, to make your indoor and outdoor spaces feel more seamless, use the same planters on your patio and entryway as in your foyer and kitchen. Lastly, don't forget about the flowers, add bouquets to spread a cheerful dose of colour around the home.

• Lemony Fresh

Appeal to all five senses with this year's updates. After your initial scrub and sorting and clearing of clutter, extend that fresh scent by adding a lemon-scented diffuser. They are a great way to bring a pleasing, calming scent into your home, while avoiding the potential danger of burning candles. Purchase the diffuser or try creating one affordably yourself.

• Lighter Linens

For a refresher that goes a long way, try brightening up the home with lighter fabrics. The update can awaken nearly every room from the living room, bedroom and bathroom to the kitchen. Swap out heavier, darker fabrics such as rugs, pillow covers, and towels for lighter ones both in texture and colour. Top beds with a lightweight blanket, folding the comforter and placing it at the foot of the bed for chilly evenings.

With a little work and a few additions, you can happily enjoy the coming months with a clean, orderly, beautiful home.

More information is available online at www.hunterdouglas.ca.
www.newscanada.com

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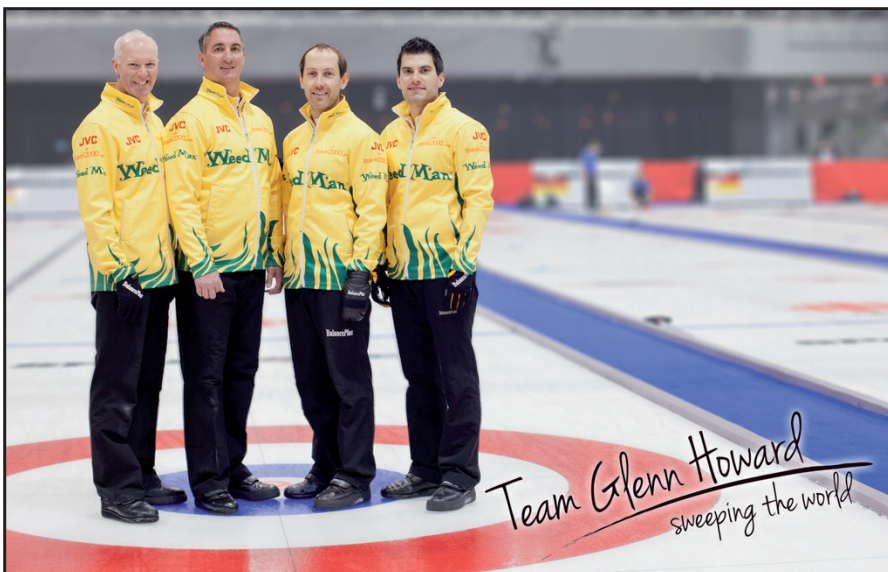
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How to select exterior stain colour combinations

Home Improvement Quick Tip:

Did you know: the most attractive homes on the block use several shades of stain on the exterior woodwork? Those homeowners have used not just one, not two, but as many as three or four colour combinations. Now just how did they select such complementary hues?

According to experts, the place to begin is by identifying the main body colour of the house. Often the brick or stone determines this colour. For example, if your main body colour is from the red family, seek out a complementary palette to mix and match stains for the doors, windows, moldings, shutters, trim, fence, deck, as well as any other decorative wood features.

A helpful tool is available online at www.olympic.com. The interactive chart on the site details seven colour schemes - green, brown, red, cream, blue, gray, and yellow. Select your home's main body colour and click to reveal a variety of palettes that you can use to make your home the best on the block.

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The Spring Garden Guide

Spring is the season of rebirth and re-growth. Which also means green-thumbs can't wait to get back in those gardens! To get you started, here are some helpful tips from garden guru Peter Cantley, at Loblaw Companies Limited

Make your garden beds. Rid planting areas of weeds and spread a 4-inch layer of compost or manure over soil. Using a pitchfork, mix soil and compost going about 10 inches deep until you've got moist crumbly soil.

Primp and prune. Remove dead or damaged branches from woody shrubs or trees before new leaf growth begins. Prune spring-flowering shrubs and trees only after the first spring bloom.

Take some tests. Different planting areas may have different needs. Check the pH balance of soil in each spot with a home soil test kit. Then as new growth appears you can treat each one with the fertilizer and amendments required.

Peter's Dos and Don'ts to get you ready for beautiful summer Blooms:

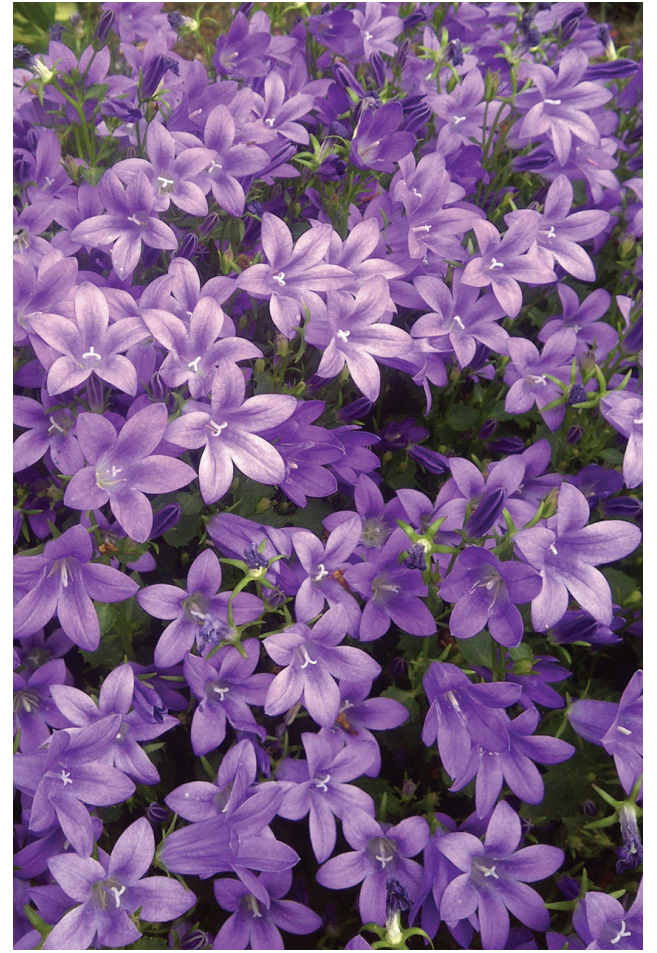
- **DO** water the garden before 10 a.m. If you leave watering for the hotter hours almost half the amount of water you apply will evaporate in the summer heat.

- **DON'T** cut back foliage of bulbs until it dries naturally. The bulb needs the green leaves to make food for next season's growth. Cutting foliage too early results in small, weak bulbs the following year.

- **DO** fertilize roses every week, all summer long. Most hybrids are very heavy feeders and need a lot of fertilizer for beautiful and healthy blooms. Be sure to plant your bushes in a location with plenty of sunlight and leave at least 3 feet in between plants for good air circulation.

- **DON'T** forget to experiment with new perennials every year. Each year, we showcase some of the latest introductions and it's a wonderful treat to find new plants to enjoy in the garden. For instance, try the PC® Campanula – Purple Get Mee, with purple bell-shaped flowers. This perennial acts like an annual with rich blooms that come back summer to fall.

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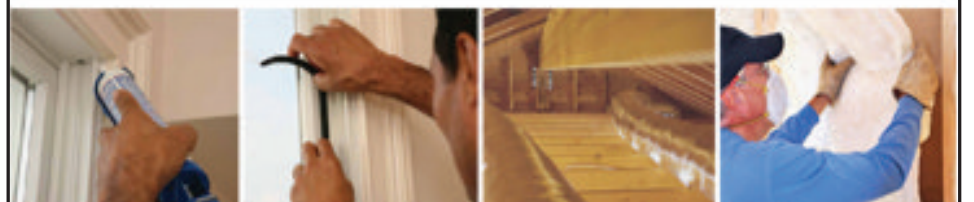
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Caring for a *freshly sodded lawn*

Sod, sometimes called turf, can quickly turn a barren landscape into a rich, thick carpet of green. Homeowners hoping to revive their lawns commonly turn to sod as the quickest means to do just that. However, once the sod has been laid down, few homeowners may know how to keep it looking its best.

Sod is real grass that is grown on special farms. It is generally grown locally to avoid long transport times that could dry out the product. Sod is typically sold in squares or rolls of grass that come with the roots and soil already attached. There may be some sort of thin backing material on the sod to keep the grass blades together.

Many homeowners turn to sod when growing lawn from seed becomes problematic or too time-consuming. Seeds can be blown around in the wind or be eaten by birds and other animals before they have a chance to germinate.

Sodding a lawn is a major investment, costing as much as \$1 per two-foot square. Depending on the size of your lawn, this can be a costly job even before adding the cost of additional supplies, such as soil, fertilizer and tilling equipment. Many homeowners who install sod want to ensure their investment lasts. Here are the main ways to care for and protect sod until it is fully established.

- Once the sod has been laid down, the lawn should be thoroughly soaked with water. Most experts recommend soaking it to a depth of 6 inches.

- It is important to establish a watering schedule to keep the

sod moist. Water the sod to a depth of one inch every other day for the first three weeks to enable the roots to securely establish themselves in the soil.

- Water the sod every other day unless the weather has been very warm. After four weeks you can generally go up to five days without watering as long as you transition slowly. The sod will change colors if it is not getting enough water. Never let the lawn turn yellow, otherwise you may have to cut out dead spots and re-sod.

- Wait two to four weeks before mowing the sod. Keep the lawn height to around two inches to ensure that it won't scald in the sun.

- After two months of established sod growth, aerate the sod to keep the soil from being too compact and to enable oxygen and nutrients to get into the soil.

- Keep children and pets off of the sod while it is establishing itself.

- Fertilize the lawn every 50 to 60 days, beginning in March and ending in October.

- Inspect the sod for pests, which may include insects or problems like fungi or weeds. Treat accordingly with products designed to remove pests.

Using sod to establish a lush lawn is a fast, albeit more expensive option to sowing seeds. After a few weeks the lawn will be thick and secure.

Sod can create an instant lawn, but it still requires certain maintenance measures to get it firmly established.



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Not only does growing your own produce allow you to save on fresh, organic produce, but edible plants grow in a variety of shapes, colours and textures enabling you to cultivate a landscape that is as unique as you are. Lowe's Seasonal Plants Expert Karey O'Halloran provides quick tips on selecting and growing the right edible plants for your garden.

- Most (but not all) vegetable and fruit plants require full sunlight- at least 4-6 hours/day
- Full sun vegetables and fruit that grow on the vine generally produce the most colour. Consider an assortment of bell peppers, eggplant, Hot House Tomatoes, strawberries, and blueberries
- Cool-season plants such as cabbage, kale, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, peas, and beans are

versatile and can tolerate some shade

- Vegetables and fruits will not grow in full shade
- Salad greens make for great edging plants as they are lush in colour and foliage.
- For small spaces- window boxes, hanging baskets, potted plants, and raised garden beds are versatile and can allow for great growing.
- Need shade? Consider planting a fruit tree in your yard.

Apple, peach, pear, or apricot varieties are all great choices for Canadian climate and produce beautiful flowers. Keep in mind that falling fruit can be messy, and could attract pests such as flies and bees.

- To control pests, plant garlic bulbs sporadically throughout your garden. This will help ward off spiders, flies, and slugs.
- If you love flowers, consider growing edible varieties such as Pansy's, Borage, or even Squash.



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Keep ants from marching to your home

With about 47 different species of ants meandering their way through Canada, this insect is the nation's number one pest problem – and are quick to crash a party.

Proper identification is critical for effective control of ants, so right here, let's meet the top five species you could see on your property as the weather heats up:

- Carpenter Ants: Canada's most popular ant species prefers to build homes in damp, dead wood, which they hollow for nesting purposes.
- European Fire Ants: Though not the traditional fire ant, this breed of vicious stingers is becoming quite common, and their bites can cause health implications for humans and small animals.
- Moisture or Cornfield Ants: These common pests are more of a nuisance than a threat and tend to nest in high, moist areas.
- Argentine Ants: Though their activity ramps up during spring and summer, their ability to adapt to the indoors has made this species a year-round threat.
- Velvety Ants: Like the carpenter ant, these insects favour trees and dead wood and can infest the structure of homes.

"Because ant colonies can quickly relocate and can include up to 300,000 ants, controlling these pests can be difficult," says pest control expert Alice Sinia, the quality assurance manager for Orkin Canada. "Getting to know their behaviour now can eliminate headaches later this spring and summer."

What steps can you take to prevent these pests as warmer weather sets in?

- Ants can enter a home through the tiniest of cracks, so take steps to ensure that your home stayed tight and sealed during the winter months. Repair leaks or water-damaged features immediately to deter ant colonies in search of water.
- Ensure that kitchen surfaces and outdoor dining areas are constantly free of crumbs, and make it a habit to wipe up food and water spills quickly.
- Be conscious when gardening and moving soil around that you may meet and disrupt a colony.

If you do spot a trail of ants marching through your home, your pest control professional can help you address the issue. Your provider can help you cut down on factors that contribute to ant colonies, so there's no need to have ants in your pants over this common warm-weather problem.



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Create an Affordable and Attractive Garden Shed

Home gardeners and lawn enthusiasts generally accumulate a number of tools of the trade in order to successfully manage their gardening needs. As a result, many homeowners build a garden shed to store all their tools and lawn care accessories.

A garden shed presents an ideal way to store all of the tools and appliances needed for the weekend hobby. Plus, it enables homeowners to clear out clutter from the garage or basement. A locked garden shed can be a safe place in which to store sharp tools, fuel and some chemical products.

Just because the shed will have utility doesn't mean it has to be an eyesore on the property. There are ways to create or purchase garden sheds that are aesthetically appealing and will blend in with the landscape or the main house.

Do-it-yourselfers who have decided to build a garden shed and want to do so

affordably can shop around for lower-priced material. It may be a good idea to purchase a framing kit from a home-improvement store or online retailer and then shop around for exterior materials. Individuals can also find used sheds from auction sites or newspaper classifieds and simply retrofit these structures to meet individual needs.

Although sheds will be exposed to the elements, because they are not liveable structures they don't require the same level of construction as a home or addition, like a garage. This means that a homeowner is able to save some money with materials. Pressboard may be durable enough and less expensive than plywood. There's little need for insulation or expensive windows. In fact, unless it is for a decorative standpoint, windows are unnecessary altogether.

It is likely that people who have had recent upgrades made on their homes may have leftover materials that can be put to use on a garden shed. Roofing shingles, extra aluminum siding and wood trim can be used on the shed. Even leftover latex paints and stains can be use on the shed.

Homeowners should visit a retailer of prefabricated sheds to see how they are made. This can provide insight as to the size and structure and the type of construction that will be needed.

If budget is not a concern, homeowners may want to purchase pre-made sheds that can be customized to mimic the architecture and color of the person's home. Stained glass and cottage features can make a shed seem like an intimate retreat nestled in the yard.

In addition to being a fine place to store garden tools, a shed can also be constructed to serve as a child's play space. A miniature home in the yard can be a fun play zone for kids and be the centerpiece for hours of imaginative outdoor fun.



Maple Smoked Ribs

2 lbs. pork side ribs
1 cup pure maple syrup
3 tablespoons frozen orange juice concentrate
3 tablespoons ketchup
2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 clove garlic, minced
2 green onions, minced

Soak maple planks in sink or clean bucket filled with water for at least 1 hour. This can be done during the first stage of cooking the ribs.

Light one side of your grill, and preheat until temperature gauge shows 350°F. Place ribs meat side up in a roasting pan. Cover pan tightly with foil and place on the unlit side of your grill. Bake for 1 1/4 hours.

In a saucepan over medium heat on the stove or on the side burner of the grill, combine maple syrup, orange juice concentrate, ketchup, soy sauce, mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Stir in curry powder, garlic and green onions. Simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Remove ribs from roasting pan, and baste completely meat side and bone side with still warm sauce. Retain half of the sauce for additional basting. Place ribs on soaked maple planks, bone side down. Put the planks with the ribs on them on one side of the grill with low heat setting directly underneath them. Turn the other side of the barbecue to high and close lid. Keep temperature around 350°F. Planks should begin to smoke within a few minutes and produce a sweet fragrant smoke in your grill. Adjust the amount of smoke you would like to add by increasing or decreasing direct heat underneath the planks, and opening or closing the lid. Do not allow planks to catch fire. Allow ribs to cook on the planks for 25 minutes. Use remaining sauce to baste ribs several times throughout cooking. Remove planks with ribs on them from the grill and place the planks directly on a plate or tray for serving.



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Turn your yard into an outdoor haven



Canadians look forward to the summer when they can emerge from their homes and enjoy time in their yards. Here are some simple ways to transform your own yard into an outdoor oasis:

First, determine how you most like to use your yard. Do you prefer relaxing outside with a book, playing with the kids, gardening, or entertaining? The answers to these questions will determine how to design your space. "I'm frequently asked how to make the best use of an outdoor space," says Mark Cullen, Home Hardware's Gardening Expert. "As I tell people, just a few small changes can really transform the overall look and feel of your space."

To create an "outdoor room" and an area that offers shade from the sun, pergolas are a great choice, and a growing trend. They allow you to create a shaded walkway or sitting area where you can enjoy your garden without worry of the sun. To outline your "outdoor room", lay out your furniture and define the "walls" with end tables, planters and other decorative elements. A fountain or a pond act as a focal point and also add an element of relaxation and nature to the space.

To minimize watering, invest in a self-watering system such as Mark's Choice Self-Watering Patio Planter, to ensure your plants remain hydrated even when you're away from home for a few days at a time.

If you enjoy spending time with friends and family, a spacious deck will provide the perfect area for entertaining. There are many options available. Wood offers a natural look and is generally the most cost-efficient option. If you are eco-minded, composite decking is made from up to 95 percent recycled material and requires little maintenance. Patio stones can be a more natural looking option which can also give more height to your privacy fence as the stones are flush with the grass line.

When it comes to privacy, there are many fence options including various woods, materials and designs, while iron decorative inserts, toppers or caps are also a great way to add appeal. If you have a small yard, a privacy fence with built-in benches and planters is a great space-saving solution. For natural privacy, consider a trellis, which is also a great sound barrier.

Last but not least, your oasis will not be complete without lush green grass and plants. Soil and grass require nitrogen to grow strong and our harsh winters can often leave grass deficient of this important nutrient. Applying a quality fertilizer, such as CIL Golfgreen Fertilizer, which features a slow release of nitrogen into the soil root zone, will improve the long-term health of your lawn. Fertilize in the spring, summer and fall: 90 per cent of the success of plant health is the result of soil nutrition.

To maximize plant growth it is worthwhile to invest in a high-quality soil mix that is specially formulated for the purpose. It's worth noting that not all growing areas are alike. Containers require different soil than a garden or flower bed, so to ensure you have your plants at their greenest, make sure you are using the right products.

More information is available online at www.homehardware.ca/gardening.



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